



# Supporting a Friend If You Are Concerned About Their Cannabis Use

Problematic use can look different for everyone. Each sign on its own may not indicate a problem, but experiencing a combination of these signs may suggest it's time to speak with a healthcare provider.

## Individual signs<sup>1</sup>

- Loss of control over use
- Spending large amounts of money on cannabis
- Using cannabis to cope with stress, anxiety, depression etc.

## Social signs<sup>1</sup>

- Impaired driving
- Disconnect or conflict with family and friends
- Missing or dropping out of important activities

## Physical signs<sup>5</sup>

- Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome (Cyclical vomiting associated with cannabis use)<sup>3</sup>
- Signs of withdrawal can include abdominal pain, shakiness or tremors, sweating, fever or chills and headaches



## Here are some ways to provide support



### Learn about Cannabis

Take some time to learn facts about cannabis before talking with the friend about their use. You can visit [ymcagta.org/ycap](http://ymcagta.org/ycap) for additional resources and information.<sup>2</sup>

### Think about When & Where

Consider a private space and plan to have <sup>2</sup> your conversation while your friend is sober.

### Listen

Make it a two-way conversation. Listen to what they have to say about their cannabis use and the reasons they are using (if they choose to share).

### Show Concern & Compassion

Communicate you are worried because you care about them. Explain what you have seen and why you are concerned. You can do this by actively listening and participating in the conversation.<sup>4</sup>

### Be Patient

A conversation about cannabis use can be challenging. Don't rush the conversation or feel you need to find a solution for them. Let them know you are there for them and can talk anytime.<sup>2</sup>

### Provide Resources

Offer your friend resources like [Kids Help Phone](#), or your provincial/territorial support services. You can contact providers as a friend or family member to learn how to support them if they are not ready to contact a provider.<sup>2</sup>

### Identify Potential Biases

Be mindful of your tone when talking. Take time before the conversation to write down your thoughts on recreational cannabis use to know your own biases. Also, avoid being judgmental toward them or their situation.<sup>2</sup>

### Take Care of Yourself

Being a support to someone with problematic cannabis use can be challenging. It is important to protect your mental and emotional well-being when dealing with serious issues.<sup>2</sup>

## References

1. Fleming, Katie, and Anna McKiernan. Talking Pot With Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide. 2020.
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3. Leu, & Routsolias, J. C. (2021). Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome: A Review of the Presentation and Treatment. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, 47 (3), 483-486.
4. The Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research. "Supporting People Who Use Substances | Here to Help." [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca), 2021, [www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/supporting-people-who-use-substances-a-brief-guide-for-friends-and-family#essence](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/supporting-people-who-use-substances-a-brief-guide-for-friends-and-family#essence). Accessed July 2022.
5. Ottawa Public Health. "Know How Cannabis Affects You." [www.ottawapublichealth.ca](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca), 6 Dec. 2019, [www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/know-what-cannabis-is.aspx](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/know-what-cannabis-is.aspx). Accessed July 2022.